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ABSTRACT

Addressing a component of critical thinking that is presently lacking in reading instruction in United States classrooms, this paper identifies and provides a review of the literature on six traits of analytical reading. Stemming directly from research in assessment and instructional practices, these traits identify the six critical reading skills necessary to develop readers who can process knowledge from print material and make meaning out of it to apply in other situations. The traits addressed in the paper are: (1) conventions; (2) comprehension; (3) context; (4) interpretation; (5) synthesis; and (6) evaluation. When used as an assessment framework, the six traits discussed in the paper function as criteria of exemplary reading skills that can be identified and evaluated within students' responses to texts. As an instructional method, the traits can be taught in a classroom situation to address critical thinking development alongside a literature-based curriculum. The paper concludes that, using the six traits, effective reading assessment and instruction can take place within clear criteria, grade-appropriate scoring guides for literacy and informational texts, and a continuum of performance skills within each of the six trait areas. (Contains 37 references.) (RS)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

The Traits of an Effective Reader:

Current Thinking on the Skills of a Proficient Reader

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent literature review of articles concerning the status of reading theory and assessment, the majority of the research indicated that the actual state of ***literacy*** in the United States school system is at an all-time high. In fact, Regie Routman in her seminal text, **Literacy At the Crossroads: Crucial Talk about Reading, Writing and Other Teaching Dilemmas**, says "generally speaking, if we look only at the 'basics'—decoding the words on a literal level—reading achievement in the United States is actually quite good."[1] In support of this result, research by the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that in a study of reading achievement in thirty-two countries, the United States outscored all countries except Finland, and furthermore, today's students outperform students from earlier generations in standardized achievement tests and reading scores among teenagers have continued to increase.[2]

However, if we look at reading as an intellectual act that encompasses more than just the literal de-coding of print on a page, the research does not support a picture of American students reading with critical intent and interest. Whereas students are scoring in the competent category in literal understandings of texts, no state scored at the level of proficient or better on the National Assessment of Educational Progress test for critical reading skills. The test, given in 1992 and 1994, was compromised of 65 percent performance-based tasks and 35 percent multiple choice items. To take one state as an example, California's fourth-graders scored 80 percent or better on decoding and literal comprehension skills. Their scores plummeted, however, on the test sections that asked

them to synthesize and create knowledge based on the information they had read.[3] The large gap between literal comprehension and reading as a component of critical thinking has US educators concerned. Dennis Parker, an administrator for the Federal Department of Education says, "Reading now means reading, understanding and thinking. If we just get better at teaching kids how to read without giving them at least equal attention to teaching them how to think, we will see few if any gains over the next five years, and the public will be more disenchanted with us than ever."[4]

In order to address that component of critical thinking that is presently lacking in reading instruction in U.S. classrooms, this paper has identified six traits of analytical reading. Stemming directly from research in assessment and instructional practices, these traits identify the six critical reading skills necessary in order to develop readers who can process knowledge from print material and make meaning out of it to apply in other situations. These traits are identified as: conventions, comprehension, context, interpretation, synthesis, and evaluation. When used as an assessment framework, the six traits function as criteria of exemplary reading skills that can be identified and evaluated within students' responses to texts. As an instructional method, the traits can be taught in a classroom situation to address critical thinking development alongside a literature-based curriculum.

This multi-functional approach to connecting assessment and instruction is rarely implemented in the classroom or at the district level. Traditionally, assessment is implemented by outside evaluation processes using standardized tests that infrequently address the actual curriculum taught to students. One researcher describes this traditional approach to assessment with the comment "it makes me think of exclusive language

and/or representation of experiences that exclude or 'mystify' the student taking the exam.."[5] Further, students are rarely, if ever, given clear target goals for performance in a given content area. Therefore, if we desire higher performance in critical reading skills, we must align the criteria of excellent reading skills with instructional methodologies. When this "partnership" takes place, "the best assessments are those that are learning experiences themselves. Ideally learning and assessment are blended together so skillfully that they are indistinguishable...[it becomes] a spiral that never ends—a seamless web in which assessment is woven invisibly into instruction."[6] The Assessment and Accountability Program at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory published a report on results from a pilot-test in a 1992-1993 classroom setting addressing a similar issue in writing assessment. In that particular instance, the six traits of analytical writing were concurrently implemented as assessment criteria for good writing and as an instructional method of teaching good writing. The report clearly contends that, "...this study does not involve "teaching to the test," it involves "teaching to the criteria." Therein lies the power, and, in fact, the whole point of the technique of teaching clearly defined performance criteria directly to students. If, in fact, the six-trait model defines what we value in writing, then teaching them the traits teaches, by definition, what good writing is. This study tends to support the conclusion that, as a result, student writing improves. Therefore we can impact student achievement by improving classroom assessment techniques, teacher skills in using them, and student self-assessment."[7] With this premise in mind, this paper will address each of the six analytical traits of reading and link them with support from contemporary reading theory to demonstrate that good reading assessment and instruction

is possible by creating exemplary criteria to serve as "target goals" for students and teachers.

DECODING CONVENTIONS

Good readers are empowered by recognizing the conventions of texts. Conventions in reading include: awareness and articulation of grammar, punctuation, vernacular speech, genres, styles, forms, types of characters, settings, plots, and modes of texts. Readers recognize, identify, and distinguish the conventions that help create literal , figurative, inferential, and informational meanings. Ultimately, readers understand and can articulate the architectural conventions of a text.

As a trait of critical reading and thinking, decoding conventions in reading means being able to talk or write with confidence in regard to the structures and organizations of texts. In a quarterly newsletter put out by the Center on English Learning and Achievement, one researcher describes the necessary use of conventions in reading to set up highly effective discussions in literature classrooms. The researcher says:

> The researchers found that establishing a consistent set of conventions for what was appropriate to discuss and how the discussion would be carried out was an important first step in creating a sense of coherence and purpose within the literature classroom. In some classes, for example, lectures might be used to introduce literary terminology, teacher-led discussions might direct the students in some sort of textual analysis, and small-group discussions might be used for exploring more personal responses to literature.[8]

Another description for the implementation of a consistent set of conventions is the idea of a "thinking frame," formulated by Bryce Hudgins, a professor of education at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. A "thinking frame" is defined as "a representation intended to guide the process of thought, supporting, organizing, and catalyzing the

process."[9] To explain it in more concrete terms, as a reader learns the vocabulary of the conventions of reading--grammar, punctuation, vernacular speech, genres, styles, forms, types of characters, settings, plots, and modes of texts—the reader creates a series of "frames" that he or she organizes information inside of in order to aid comprehension. In the simplest of language, the words a reader uses to describe the structure of a text aids comprehension and meaning-making by focusing the information. After learning to construct a frame, a reader internalizes the process by practicing the frame frequently in meaningful circumstances and then applying the frame and its organized contents to other contexts. Upon learning these "thinking frames," texts are more malleable for good readers. In a California State Department of Education publication entitled "A Sampler of Language Arts Assessment," effective readers are described as able to "connect with, reflect on, and challenge the text."[10] In order to do so, however, the creator of the assessment model lists the quality of "recognition of linguistic and structural complexities" (a sample thinking frame) as integral to excellent reading performance.

Two other articles talked about conventions in particular as a key trait in developing sophisticated reading ability. The first article, "Organizing and Retaining Information Like An Author," states that, "most people who are successful readers in high school and college have a well developed yet unconscious sense of how authors structure ideas in narrative texts."[11] This process involves an implicit grasp of the importance of textual conventions in directing meaning acquisition. Good readers employ organizational vocabulary, thinking frames and now structural clues to increase meaning. Bean lists these categories as structure indicators for a narrative text: setting, initiating event, internal response, attempts, consequence, and reaction. Recognizing these structures of the

narrative form help readers predict and make meaning of events in narratives; the structures also combine to create a framework helpful for retrieving information. Furthermore, as readers become more accustomed and attuned to structural cues in texts, they develop tacit understandings of texts based on signal words and dominant patterns designed to move the text along and initiate levels of meaning and interpretation. Bean concludes his essay with the comment that "in essence, understanding an author's pattern of organization is a starting point, a foundation for creative, critical thinking"(126).

In the expository text, readers still use structural clues to aid in meaning acquisition and creation. The expository forms of cause and effect, comparison/contrast, time order, problem/solution, and argument, for example, all serve as modes of texts that inform and direct readers towards different "readings" of those texts. In Vicki Hancock's essay, "Information Literacy for Lifelong Learning," she defines this process with the term, "information literacy." She says: "information literacy is an individual's ability to recognize a need for information, identify and locate appropriate information sources, know how to gain access to the information obtained in those sources, evaluate the quality of the information obtained, organize the information, and use the information effectively."[12] By incorporating the techniques of information literacy, readers are not held hostage by educational practices that traditionally functioned as information-holders and dispensers. Hancock goes on to say, "when teachers encourage students to do their own research, students take responsibility for their learning and are more effective consumers of information resources. They learn to recognize that information is packaged in a variety of ways, that it is packaged using a variety of techniques, that it serves a variety of interests, and that it contains a variety of value messages"(2).

Bean and Hancock establish the importance of structural indicators to enable meaning to work within and upon the constructs of conventions. Further, the two articles work together to demonstrate that, regardless of the types of genres, the use of structural knowledge to inform, develop, and define meaning is indicative of a resource-based learning experience. In this type of experience, not only does the reader use the conventions of text to develop meaning, he/she uses the skills of appropriate vocabulary, thinking frames, and structural knowledge to lay the groundwork for a purposeful, authentic, and responsible reading relationship where the student decides and directs the course of the reading within the boundaries of concrete criteria.

ESTABLISHING COMPREHENSION

Comprehension is a reader creating meaning from written text. As a key trait of effective reading, comprehension is defined as: a reader identifying and articulating facts, settings, actions, and characters in a text; a reader making predictions about what will happen next in the text; a reader identifying the "nuts and bolts" purpose of a text; and a reader identifying the main focus and specific details of a text to generate informed questions and comments. In essence, comprehension is creating meaning from written text to accurately understand what the writer is communicating.[13] In order to enrich and move beyond the skill-based ideas of literal de-coding with sight vocabulary, phonics instruction, and comprehension strategies designed to identify main idea and supporting details as isolated parts, not integral functions, of a text, researchers say that we must begin to understand that comprehension is, in one Stanwood, Washington educator's terms, "not static. Comprehension fluctuates much like a radio wave. It becomes stronger

or weaker based on the text, subject, and/or situations. Comprehension does not exist on an isolated level that remains constant all the time. Comprehension changes."[14]

Because comprehension is a mental process, it can only be observed indirectly. This dilemma is compounded by the fact that the mental process is an evolving one. However, as researchers we recognize that readers use a multitude of comprehension strategies in the process of constructing meaning from text. Some of the strategies that readers use are: predicting, confirming, using prior knowledge, making comparisons, re-reading or reading ahead to deal with difficult ideas, visualizing, reading for a purpose, and self-monitoring for knowledge acquisition.[15] When the strategies are used together to deepen comprehension of a given text, "layers of meaning" are created. In the revised California reading assessment model for 1992, researchers created a series of holistic strategies to identify the indicators of comprehension. Three of the indicators work together to demonstrate the idea of "layers of meaning." They are: (1) Readers demonstrate understanding of the work as a whole; (2)Through the process of alluding to and/or re-telling specific passages readers validate or expand ideas; and (3) Readers retell, summarize, or paraphrase with purpose.[16] Upon implementing each of these three steps, a reader creates meaning from a text that encompasses both breadth and depth, and comprehension has become critical thinking as it moves beyond the literal de-coding of past definitions.

In the literature review of research on comprehension as a critical reading skill, researchers supported the contention that comprehension is indeed a higher-thinking skill.[17] In fact, Harry Singer's article, " The Effect of Metacognitive Instruction in Outline and Graphic Organizer Construction on Students' Comprehension in a Tenth-Grade

World History Class," discusses two types of comprehension students develop when directed towards disseminating knowledge from texts with critical intent. He says:

> Recently the term metacognition has been used to describe two types of knowledge a reader employs in learning from text. The first type of metacognitive knowledge a reader employs involves monitoring comprehension. In short, the alert reader continually monitors whether or not information in the text is making sense. A second type of metacognitive knowledge explored in the present study involves the regulation of cognition through a well-developed repertoire of study strategies. (154)

Although Singer defines these strategies as "study" strategies, I would encourage readers to see them in terms of "comprehension strategies." As we discussed earlier, comprehension is a mental process, and readers develop "ways of reading" that enable them to retain information, make sense of the information read, and conceptualize ideas and theories in the context of the text itself. Singer describes a process similar to the mental comprehension process I just described. He says, "a diagrammatic strategy forces the reader to transform linear prose into nonlinear hierarchical representation. Information that is organized hierarchically is generally easier to retain and retrieve than a linear structure...additionally, graphically organizing material entails deep processing in order to reorganize the material and depict interrelationships among ideas"(155). In order to produce the "deep processing and interrelationships among ideas" that Singer describes, readers mentally have to organize the information from a text to abstract, integrate, and retain the concepts contained within the text. Towards that end result, Singer advocates a process of mentally organizing textual material by:

1) selection—devise a topic sentence that organizes the material around a central theme

2) question—formulate three mental questions based on your topic idea

3) conclusion—mentally address your questions to the topic idea and apply the knowledge of the text to reach your conclusion.[18]

Incorporating comprehension "attack" strategies into the reading process results in students who will read and comprehend with purpose; they will sort unimportant information from critical information; they will actively seek understanding by creating an organizing framework in which the critical comprehension can take place.

One final aspect of comprehending as a critical thinking skill involves the use of recognizing types of knowledge domains. A knowledge domain is defined as an area of knowledge where the reader has some level of understanding and processing ability. In her article, "A Schema-Based Framework for Representing Knowledge," Tina Anderson says, "it is obvious that many domains of knowledge participate in guiding the comprehension of prose. Some domains of knowledge can be identified by virtually everyone, whereas other domains are not very obvious and can be identified only when there is a theoretical understanding of comprehension mechanisms."[19] Anderson lists the six most frequently used knowledge domains: linguistic, rhetorical, causal, intentional, spatial, and roles, personalities and objects. When reading a text, a knowledge domain will be activated by a clue in a text. In the linguistic domain, familiarity with written language is the immediate clue; however, if a text contains a foreign language or mathematical symbols, the knowledge domain may be further down the continuum of expertise. This example can be demonstrated across the types of knowledge domains. For an experienced reader, invocation of the knowledge domain where he/she is more of an "expert" produces more precise comprehension. Thus, an experienced reader will choose texts that support his/her knowledge domains. If confronted with a text full of unknown knowledge domains, an

intuitive reader will incorporate other comprehension skills to compensate for the low level of expertise on the continuum of knowledge domains in the unknown areas.

As the literature review has noted, comprehension is more than a literal re-telling of texts. Deep, purposeful comprehension emerges when readers create "layers of meaning" for themselves through comprehension strategies. Further, when confronted with a seemingly impenetrable text, good readers can invoke their critical reading ability by defining their tasks, formulating their strategies for engaging with the text, monitoring their progress throughout the text, and validating their conclusions by posing questions to themselves and to the text itself.

REALIZING CONTEXT

Readers who recognize context in texts explore multiple layers of meaning. They see psychological and cultural nuances in texts; they recognize their own set of complexities they bring to texts. Readers examine the degree of fit between the author's ideas or information and their own prior knowledge or experience. Recognizing and valuing contextual aids in texts, readers identify tone, purpose, and context found in texts. Readers recognize that there is a relationship and communication between the author and the reader and the mediating factor is--the text.

Recognizing context in reading is hierarchically somewhat more difficult to identify than the two previous traits we have discussed, conventions and comprehension. Context within a text allows for reader manipulation of the text. It can be most easily understood as **a dialogue of negotiation**. Lil Brannon defines it this way, "we begin reading any text with an implicit faith in its coherence, an assumption that its author intended to convey some meaning and made the choices most likely to convey the meaning effectively."[20] This

"implicit faith" we have as readers is our first and strongest impulse as readers. We want to believe in the message of the text; we want to acknowledge the authority of the author. Brannon says, "we tolerate writer's manipulation of the way we see the subject that is being addressed. Our tolerance derives from a tacit acceptance of the author's 'authority' to make the statements we are reading"(159). Yet, as readers, when we grow and begin to question the intentions of texts, we gain rather than lose in the process. Brannon says "that if readers and writers can exchange information about intention and effect, they can negotiate ways to bring actual effect as closely in line with desired intention as possible"(162). This "exchange of information" that Brannon describes should be visualized as a silent dialogue the reader has with a text during the process of reading. A reader searching for and questioning context is a responsible, committed reader.

The NCTE and the IRA developed a joint task force in 1993 to develop standards for assessment in writing and reading. One of their report's statements serves as an excellent definition of the task of searching for intention: "like a living organism, reading exists only in interaction with others, in a social interdependence. Reading is a system of signs through and within which we represent and make sense of the world and of ourselves. Text does not contain meaning; rather meaning lies in the social relationship within which reading occurs."[21] When the report states that reading only exists in interaction with others, I read the statement to describe the interactive process between reader and text or reader, text and author. When reading for context, the reader is not a passive collector of information; rather, the reading experience creates an opportunity for transaction. Thus, in Glennellen Pace's words, "reader and text within a particular context are both changed as meaning is constructed. We are forced to acknowledge a readers'

home discourses, schemas , and personal histories, as prime contributors on the readers' part."[22]

This contention that not only do we read for the intentions of the author, but that we also read with the awareness that we, as readers, bring contexts to the text is a new and possibly revolutionary idea. Although this acknowledgment of reader context brings to mind a "pandora's box" of assessment bias and distortion concerns, a reminder to see the trait of context as a "dialogue of negotiation" will enable teachers, students, and assessors to "recognize diversity of strengths—differing discourse styles across languages and dialects represent reading strengths. There are multiple literacies—purposes and ways of knowing. They represent our ability to function effectively in a pluralistic and global society."[23] Ultimately then, when the idea of diversity of strengths is realized, we will see a recognition of the power of "community" in reading. Joseph Harris, a reading and writing researcher says:

> One only begins to understand the place has come from through the act of leaving it. Thus, the task of the student is imagined as one of crossing the border from one community of discourse to another, of taking on a new sort of language. We must ask our students to work within and against both their own language and the text they are reading. The move then is not simply from one discourse to another but towards a hesitant and tenuous relationship to both. Such a pedagogy helps remind us that the borders of most discourses are hazily marked and often traveled, and that the communities they define are thus often indistinct and overlapping.[24]

With Harris's words in mind, we recognize the trait of context as vital to the idea of critical reading ability. Further, with its placement in the six analytical traits of reading, we acknowledge that the process of reading is an active process of meaning, that it is dynamic

and changing, that it builds upon a student's cultural, intellectual, and linguistic experiences, and ultimately, that reading is a profoundly social act.

DEVELOPING INTERPRETATION

Interpretation produces "invested readers." Readers interpret texts to satisfy, extend, and expand personal and academic interests. Readers who interpret texts employ these skills: they "fill in gaps"—real or imagined; they use clues and evidence from the text to draw conclusions; they make plausible interpretations of ideas, facts, concepts, and/or arguments; they recognize and deal with ambiguities in texts, often times settling the disparities through thoughtful interpretation; they revise, reshape, and/or deepen earlier interpretation; they reflect on the meaning of the text, including larger or more universal significance; they express a major understanding about or insight into a subject, an aspect of self, or of the text's connection to life in general.[25]

Interpretation is one of the most widely accepted skills of critical thinking attributed to the act of reading. However, how many times in the classroom has the teacher asked a question designed to elicit an interpretative response, and he/she is faced with a sea of blank faces? As one educator put it, "It's not that my students can't answer the question. Given appropriate clues, they don't have a problem finding the answer, but constantly tailoring questions to a particular text would create a dependence on me I wanted to avoid; I wanted to nurture independent learners."[26] In order to create the opportunity for independent learning, and thus critical thinking, students need to be allowed to develop a "hands on" approach to interpreting texts. Lindquist calls this process "application." She says, "allow the students to transfer ideas into another setting so that students can interpret the way an idea is used in a story to a way the same idea

relates to their lives"(35). Although this instructional approach seems somewhat simplistic in terms of creating interpretative, thoughtful readers, it is a starting point. It is helpful if we view it as the "comfort zone." Once initial interpretation is established in the comfort zone, students begin to gain confidence and branch out into more sophisticated interpretative modes—academic, philosophical, social, religious, etc. Developing interpretations of a given text requires the reader to go beyond the initial impression to develop a more complete and complex understanding of the text. Bryce Hudgins's essay "Children's Self-Directed Critical Thinking," describes interpretation as "the reasonable assessment of statements, and also the disposition to give evidence in support of conclusions and to require such a justification by others before they are willing to accept a conclusion"(263). If we recognize interpretation as jointly reader-based and text-based then we are nudging readers forward in interpretative skills to potential synthesis when they will use textual evidence to support ideas and connections. However, before synthesis can be employed upon textual material, interpretation must be used spontaneously by the reader to "invest" in the text. Hudgins comments, "if he or she must be prompted to interpret the child's critical thinking remains dependent upon an external agent, such as a teacher, and does not meet the criteria of what we mean by self-directed critical thinking"(264). Thus, the process of interpretation must follow this journey in order to propel our learners into critical thinkers: (1) the interpretation is reflective and purposeful, grounded initially in ideas that are "investing" for him or her; (2) the initial interpretation initiates the process of inquiry; and (3) the readers takes the initial interpretations and enlarges it, expands it, connects it to an interpretation of larger significance. By following this path to thoughtful interpretation students will search for relevant meaning. By

changing the practice of interpretation from a memorized or formulaic skill into a transacted skill of experimentation, of choice, of comfort, of exploration, we "teach our students to fish instead of catching them a fish."[27] Judith Langer, a reader-response critic, comments on the subtle shift in responsibility from teacher-driven interpretation to student-driven interpretation. She says, "students' 'envisionments'—the shifting understandings they have as they read and discuss literature—are crucial to their understanding of text. Help students trust and explore their own responses to text, students learn to value the open-ended literary experience. They develop increasingly complex responses and apply analytical tools to texts as well."[28] In essence then, research supports the contention that interpretation is a critical thinking activity, however, for it to become a ***self-directed*** critical thinking activity, we must hand the process back to the student. Just as we allow for revision in writing, we must allow for revision in thinking. By doing so, we open up opportunities for students to develop capable, supple minds that can, given a new situation (or a new text) learn to engage with the process of interpretation—calling it their own—and draw upon the familiar strength of their own experience, personality, culture, and values as they make thoughtful interpretations of texts.

INTEGRATING FOR SYNTHESIS

Readers synthesize information and ideas from written text to compare and extend meaning from multiple sources.[29] Readers show sensitivity to the structure of the text; they understand and can articulate how parts of the text work together, inform one another or contradict one another. Readers synthesize texts to demonstrate how a text changes, develops, informs itself, in essence, builds meaning. Readers grapple with texts

through the process of synthesizing and emerge with grounded, defensible knowledge. Readers take a text apart and compare information with contextual knowledge. Readers make connections. Readers extend meaning beyond text's literal boundaries. Readers compare and contrast the ideas and points of multiple authors. Readers critically review their reactions to an author's ideas and point of view from the perspective of their own ideas, experiences, and knowledge. Readers develop research on content areas based on a synthesis of multiple sources of information. Readers synthesize information and texts across the curriculum and across content areas.

Similar to interpretation, the critical thinking skill of synthesis in reading is process-oriented and dependent upon students developing confidence in the skill before becoming proficiently adept at it. John Hattie in his article, "Effects of Learning Skills Interventions on Student Learning: A Meta-Analysis,"[30] says that the task of reading can be construed as "interventionist" in design. In other words, students combine learning and reading by synthesizing the two experiences together. One process interrupts the other in order to inform it. When we apply his ideas to the process of synthesis, his hierarchical development of synthesis as a process of critical thinking has interesting ramifications. His theory is as follows. At the base level of synthesis he sees it as "unistructural. If intervenes based on one relevant feature or dimension. It's target parameter is an individual characteristic, skill or technique"(105). As an example, a reader just beginning his or her education in the process of synthesizing materials might compare two poems due to their similar titles or subjects, or perhaps would contrast two novels of the 19th-Century based on historical proximity. Hattie's second level of development is called "multistructural"(105). In a multistructural synthesis, he says, "a multistructural

internvention involves a range of independent strategies or procedures, but without any integration or orchestration as to individual differences or demands of content or context"(105). An example of this type of synthesis would involve comparison of several poems across the range of a given area, yet scant attention would be paid to direct differences of the poems or ways that the poems widely diverged from one another. The reader may attempt to focus just on one aspect of the common traits among the poems and yet would not address the ways they are different. Hattie's third level of synthesis is called "relational." In relational synthesis, he says, "all the components in a relational intervention are integrated to suit the individual's needs, are orchestrated to the demands of a particular task and content, and are strictly regulated to stay within the bounds of discretion"(105). This type of synthesis is the reader grouping poems so forcefully due to similarities that he or she does not allow for the subtleties or individual characteristics of the poems to have their own voice. It is a reader attempting to coerce the synthesis as opposed to allowing his or her interpretation and intention to have some interplay within the response to the text. The highest level of synthesis on Hattie's scale of development is called "the extended abstract." This is the level of synthesis we are trying to develop in "good" readers. Hattie comments, "in an extended abstract intervention, the integration achieved in the previous category is generalized to a new domain"(105). At this level of synthesis, the comparisons, dissimilarities, or integration of knowledge between and among texts is so well done, that it literally creates a "new text" fraught with its own voice, intention, interpretation and evaluation. It is wonderful melding of primary and secondary sources, of inquiry and knowledge, of thoughtful and analytical prose. These types of extended abstracts can be seen in the "A" research paper or the valedictorian's

reflection on high school education. The finest example of synthesis would demonstrate how to sort and reconstruct text concepts in order to depict their interrelationships and/or causal relationships.

CRITIQUING FOR EVALUATION

Readers evaluate texts at the highest level of critical thinking. Evaluation of a given text is based on a reader's understanding of the text's conventions, on the compilation of comprehension strategies invoked to make meaning of the text, on searching out the contexts within the text and then interpreting them thoughtfully and with purpose, and on a synthesis of the text's given place in a causal or interrelationship with other texts. With this wealth of knowledge in hand, readers evaluate a text to determine its quality and effectiveness within its genre and subject. These particular skills are invoked during the process of evaluation: readers experiment with ideas, think divergently, take risks, express opinions, speculate, explore alternative scenarios, raise questions, make predictions, and think metaphorically. Through thoughtful evaluation readers challenge the text by agreeing or disagreeing, arguing, endorsing, questioning, and/or wondering about a text's implications. At this level of reading, readers are actively engaged with the text and have committed themselves on some level—emotional, academic, social, cultural—to making the text "their own" through the process of evaluation. By making a text "their own" reader have developed a relationship with a text based on the impetus of the analytical traits of reading. During evaluation, readers judge the effectiveness of literary and informational devices, and they contrast the accuracy of information from a written text with other sources of information and personal knowledge. Readers evaluate by testing the validity of the author's ideas, information, and/or logic by comparison with

other authors, their own knowledge, and cultural understanding. Through introspective evaluation, readers identify an author's biases, cultural and philosophical references, and underlying purpose. Kathy Short, a reading and writing teacher, comments that "[in evaluating texts,] what we create with inquiry isn't answers all of the time, but it is understanding which may change as we continue the inquiry. We inquire not to narrow down, fix an answer: we inquire to open up, unearth new questions, even increase confusion."[31] Through this "confusion" students develop curiosity. Edward Hoostein, in his article, "Enhancing Student Motivation: Making Learning Interesting and Relevant," says "curiosity is a condition of aroused uncertainty that exists when there is a gap between a given and desired state of knowledge...[readers] subsequent behavior following curiosity is generally exploration, a search for information in order to reduce uncertainty and eliminate discrepancy."[32] The process of evaluation is exploration, and the end result is an evaluation of a text that is thoughtful, grounded, accurate, researched, and tested. Raymond Wlodkowski calls the reader who participates in the process of evaluation "a good reader. He/She is graced with a perspective that makes the difficult desirable. Learning is often extremely difficult and risky, but the reader is continuously growing towards increased self-direction and effectiveness."[33] The ability to evaluate texts is the decision to assert one's voice in the textual relationship. Paul Friere, a philosopher, says that "the literacy process, as a cultural act of freedom, is an act of knowing in which the learner assumes the role of knowing subject in dialogue with the author. It is a process through which people who had been previously submerged in reality begin to emerge in order to reassert themselves with critical awareness. [By evaluating] they gain the right of

self-expression and world-expression, of creating and recreating, of deciding and choosing and ultimately participating in society's historical processes."[34]

CONCLUSION

With the six analytical traits of reading now defined and placed in a contextual literature review, effective reading assessment and instruction can take place within clear criteria, grade-appropriate scoring guides for literary and informational texts, and a continuum of performance skills within each of the six trait areas. In addition to the traits of good reading, the literature review has also suggested the ways to make classrooms more open to critical reading skills. In researcher Brian Cambourne's words, there are seven conditions to critical reading development. They are: "(1) immersion of readers in texts of all kinds; (2) multiple, ongoing demonstrations of construction and use of texts; (3) the expectation that readers will succeed; (4) allowing readers to make their own decisions and take responsibility; (5) time and opportunity to use reading in realistic, authentic ways; (6) allowance for approximation, understanding the essential natures of 'mistakes' in promoting learning; and (7) response—from knowledgeable peers and teachers."[35] Once again, the connection between assessment and instruction is noted. Without teaching the criteria of good reading, our readers will sometimes produce good readings, but those times will be haphazard and prone to chance. However, with target goals firmly in place—the performances described by the six analytical traits of reading—reading will become purposeful, thoughtful, engaging, and thorough. Our readers will also be thinkers. The International Reading Association noted in 1988 that, "reading assessment must reflect recent advances in the understanding of the reading process...instructional decisions are too often made from assessments that define reading

as a sequence of discrete skills that students must master to become readers. Such assessments foster inappropriate instruction.[36]" Ultimately, we hope to produce readers as described in Alberto Manguel's **New York Times** 1997 bestseller, **A History of Reading**. He says:

> We read to find the end, for the story's sake. We read not to reach it, for the sake of the reading itself. We read searchingly, like trackers, oblivious of our surroundings. We read distractedly, skipping pages. We read in gusts of sudden pleasure, without knowing what brought the pleasure along...We read generously, making excuses for the text, filling gaps, mending faults. And sometimes, when the stars are kind, we read with an intake of breath, with a shudder, as if a memory had suddenly been rescued from a place deep within us—the recognition of something we never knew was there, or of something which we vaguely felt as a flicker or a shadow, whose ghostly form rises and passes back into us before we can see what it is.[37]

Finally, as Manguel reminds us, reading is a lifelong learning experience, and there are moments, fleeting and transitory, when it is a transforming experience as well.

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